AF Backstage

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER – FOR SUBSCRIBERS

And the winner is...

What I do!

Nick Veitch – Consultant editor

In this part of *Backstage*, we take a look at the *Amiga Format* team, the people who make the magazine what it is. This month, it's an extended version because Nick says he is a very important member of the team, and he's also quite funny!

THERE ARE NO winners or losers. Not in what I'm going to talk about here, anyway. What I want to talk (or should that be write?) about are the results of the 1994 *Amiga Format* reader survey. Now, most years, we publish the results in the magazine some months after the survey was printed. But this year instead of printing the questionnaire as part of the editorial part of the mag, and making everyone lose a few precious pages of games or serious stuff, we loose-inserted it instead. This also meant that respondents didn't have to rip up their copies of *AF* to reply.

One other difference, though, is that this year we're not printing the results. Why should we undertake time-consuming and expensive research then print results from which all our competitors can benefit? The only people who are going to benefit from this year's survey are you, the readers. By knowing more about what you like, what you dislike, what you use your Amigas for, and also what kit you have, we can make *Amiga Format* more appropriate to your needs. Great!

Another difference between this and last year's surveys, is that this time we analysed the feedback from non-subscribers and subscribers separately. As I mentioned, we aren't going to print any figures, but there are some interesting comparisons to be made.

Subscribers tend to be older, are more likely to be employed and to have higher incomes than non-subscribers. No surprises there. In fact, as a rule the £47 a year subscription rate is quite a sum for some of our younger readers.

More interestingly, you are more likely to have an A500 than NS (non-subscribers), who are much more likely to be A1200 users. This is easily explained by the fact that you generally have more kit, and changing your machine could require you to dump drives and monitors, for example. Far more of you subscribers have A4000/030s, but you have far fewer CD^{32}s than do NS.

In keeping with your machine choice, many more of you use Workbench 1.2/1.3 compared with NS, but a mere 20-odd per cent of all users still cling to it. It is with RAM that you start to show the superiority of your set-ups – far more subscribers have 4Mb and above than do NS. Interestingly, *AF* can stop worrying about trying to get demos and programs that will run in half a meg (not that many will these days, but we do try) as only one per cent of all our readers have less than a meg. To those people all we can say is: upgrade now!

Over half of you subscribers have a hard drive while the figure for NS is far lower. But you also outnumber NS when it comes to owning a printer, monitor, video digitiser, extra floppy, extra RAM, MIDI, replacement mouse and joystick. So you aren't just more serious about the serious side of your machines, you also take your gaming more seriously, too. But

What I am supposed to do at *Amiga Format* is a closely guarded secret. It is so secret that the managing director of the company doesn't know, and in fact, neither do I.

I can't tell you what I am supposed to do, so I'll tell you what I actually do. A typical day goes something like this:

7:30am: I set out for my six-mile morning jog around Bath.

8:00am: I wake up and wish I could stop having that recurring nightmare about doing healthy exercise.

9.30am(ish): I arrive at the office and exchange pleasantries with Richard Baguley (who, we suspect, never goes home).


It's a steal!

Get Virgin's superb *Beneath A Steel Sky* and save an extra £5 in our special subscriber offer.

The game that scored a massive 94 per cent in *Amiga Format* Issue 57 can be yours for only £24.99, a massive £10 off list price, and a further reduction of £5 on *Amiga Format*'s own special offer price.

Just flip the page and fill in the form overleaf to get in on this brilliant deal!
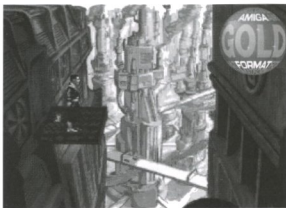
when it comes to your choice of games, you tend to go for strategy and sports games, while our survey found that NS tend to play platforms, shoot-em-ups and beat-em-ups far more frequently.

Compared with NS far more of you subscribers read our sister title *Amiga Shopper*, but fewer of you read *Amiga Power*, another sister. When it comes to magazines from other publishers (spit) you are more faithful to *Amiga Format* than NS are – thank you for that.

One thing that truly surprises me is the number of you who are still struggling with the awful Workbench 1.3. This crude and ugly GUI is limiting your ability to access some superb programs. We will continue to support the old versions of Workbench as long as possible, but if we are fair, we can only really promise you about a quarter of the Coverdisks, since over 75 per cent of users are now on Workbench 2.0 or higher.

I can hear the howls of disapproval already. But I implore you people to upgrade. You are limiting your own computing potential. We will be doing our best to bring you a special offer through the pages of *Amiga Format* for the Workbench 2.1 software/hardware combination. If we manage, we'll print instructions on how to fit the thing, too.

You have the finest home computer in the world. Make the most of it. Just imagine being able to use *all* of the programs on the Subscribers' Superdisk. WB2 users can!

One thing's for certain, though. We'll be using all the data we've collected to try and make *Amiga Format* even more suitable to your computing needs. With the info we have on what software and hardware you hope to purchase in the next year, we can bring you the right buyer's guides, and product round-ups. With your comments on which parts of the mag you like (or dislike) we can try and decide what space to allocate to various sections of the magazine. And when it's all said and done if you dislike (or like) what's being done, you can always write and let us know.

It's goodbye from me

This is my last *Backstage*, and my last issue of *Amiga Format*. I would like to thank all readers, particularly subscribers, for making this such a great job. I've enjoyed every minute of it, and I hope to see you all at shows in future. But most importantly, remember... buy Team17 games! – *Marcus*.

10.30am: I start thinking about the possibility of writing something or maybe calling someone. This usually involves me popping up to the smoking room for a few Marlboro Lights.
11.00am: Stephen Bradley asks me how the grabbing systems work, because nothing seems to be happening. I reluctantly go through the grabbing procedure exactly the same way Steve has done several times already, but amazingly, it works for me.
11.45am: The sandwich man arrives and the office plunges into chaos.
11.55am: I insult the *Amiga Shopper* refugees (who have moved into a corner of our office) for a bit, hoping for a response.
11.56am: I give up insulting *Shopper* and insult designer Frank Bartucca instead.
11.58am: I get a phone call from the disk duplicators, asking if I can go through the duplication deadlines one more time. I do so.
12.00: I start to review a highly technical and very tricky piece of hardware, drawing on my years of experience and immense technical knowledge.
12.10pm: I finish the review of the external disk drive and call up an ARexx macro to generate a random score for the verdict.
12.12pm: Someone from the production department calls me to check that I have spoken to the disk duplicators.
12.13pm: The disk duplicators call me and say that they will need the disk masters a week early. They say the production department have cleared it.
12.20pm: I realise that the disk must be finished by this evening. I start thinking seriously about getting some software for it and immediately ring up my spies to find out what the other magazines will be getting for their disks.
12.25pm: I ring up the companies involved and convince them that they will be better off sending their stuff to *Amiga Format*.
12.45pm: Delicate negotiations are broken off because Richard Jones challenges me to a game of pinball.
2.00pm(ish): Having lost (again) I return to the office in low spirits.
2.10pm: I sort out the Coverdisk and send a master off to the duplicators.
2.15pm: The duplicators ring up and say they have made a mistake, and that they don't need

the disk until next week.
2.23pm: I have an argument with art editor Sue White about when the hardware photoshoot is going to be. I call her a nagging old woman and she goes away.
2.28pm: Julie Tolley asks me what I have done with all my commissioning forms. I point at the large pile of paper that has slipped off my desk on to the floor. She goes away.
2.40pm: Marcus appears and tells me to write a six-page feature on something. I explain to him just how mistaken he is and that we don't really want to bother with that subject.
2.41pm: I start writing the feature.
2.42pm: Marcus comes back and tells me to forget that feature, because he has decided it won't work.
3.00pm: I go to the shop and buy some chocolate by way of celebration.
3.01pm: I meet Caligula, sorry, the managing director, and say something cryptic to him to keep him nervous. He doesn't know what I am supposed to do either, and it was him who gave me the job.
3.08pm: Sue starts talking to me again and then helps herself to whatever chocolate I have. I make a mental note to call her a fat nagging old woman in future.
3.09pm: I tell Richard Jones that lots of the reviews have changed so that he will have to make up a new flatplan for the issue. I make a note of the changes myself so that I can change them all back again tomorrow.
3.10pm: I start ringing my pals. They come up with lots of excellent feature ideas which I will suggest at the next planning meeting.
4.00pm: We have a post mortem on the issue that has just been published. The publisher says lots of things about the magazine. One person volunteers to stay awake and take notes so the rest of us know what happened.
6.02pm: Frank and I nip off for a few drinks, promising to come back soon.
9.59pm: Frank and I return to collect our jackets before the office closes. We bid Richard Baguley goodnight and go back to the pub.

So you see, it's not all as easy as it sounds. It takes mental agility, supreme dedication and a nervous system impervious to the effects of alcohol to work at *Amiga Format*.
Don't try it at home.

Just what is all this Backstage stuff about?

Backstage is part of the magazine (all right, so it's a separate bit) especially for subscribers. It's a way of thanking you for committing yourselves to the magazine for a whole year at a time. It's also a place to discuss things; a forum to tell you things that the other readers are denied, more for lack of

space than because we don't like them – every reader is sacred. And it's a place to get to know the team, and find out what's going on behind the scenes here at Future Publishing.
If there's anything you would like to see in it, write to: Backstage, Amiga Format, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

Subscribers' special *Steel Sky* offer

Please send me a copy of Virgin's stunning Beneath A Steel Sky at the special subscribers'-only price of £24.99 – a saving of £10 on the RRP.

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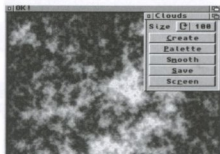
AMFSL04/93

Once again Richard Baguley has scoured the Public Domain scene to bring you the finest games and utilities on the very wonderful Amiga Format Subscribers' Superdisk. You lucky things.

GETTING STARTED

This disk is not bootable, so to access the programs on it you need to boot up your machine using your normal Workbench disk. In order to pack on a large number of files, we've compressed all of them using Stefan Boberg's LHA program, but don't panic. To decompress them, all you need to do is to click on the appropriate Icon. This will start off a script which will decompress the programs and files to the RAM disk. You can then run them from here, or copy them to another disk.

What were the skies like when you were young? You can re-create those lovely little fluffy white-clouds with the Clouds AGA program.

CLOUDS AGA

This is the latest version of a veteran of the Amiga PD scene, which now supports the AGA modes offered by the A1200 and A4000. It's a fractal cloud generator, which can create random cloudscapes and save them as IFF files.

If you have ever tried to ray-trace landscape scenes, you'll know that one of the most difficult parts is getting a sky that looks real.

You could use a digitised image, but these not only require you to have an expensive digitiser, you also have to get hold of a really good sky image, which is rather more difficult than

you might think. Clouds AGA enables you to generate your own little fluffy cloudscapes with only a few simple mouse clicks. It uses a fractal equation to generate realistic-looking clouds which can then be saved out as IFF files and used for whatever purpose you require.

To generate your cloudscape, just double-click on the program Icon and select the screen mode you require. If you then click on Create, a small version of your cloudscape will be generated. You can change the size by clicking on the cycle gadget at the top of the box, which gives you a choice of 25 per cent, 50 per cent, 75 per cent, or 100 per cent which is the full screen image.

If you are using a high resolution screen, the full screen image will take several minutes to generate. Each cloudscape you generate will be different, because the program picks a random seed number every time you click on the generate button.

Also included with Clouds AGA is an excellent manual which is in AmigaGuide format, so you will need to install the AmigaGuide program from the Subscribers' Superdisk Eight on your machine before you can read it.

If you haven't got Superdisk Eight, AmigaGuide is widely available from Public Domain libraries and is also included with Workbench 2 and 3. Clouds AGA author, Daniel Amor, has also included the Oberon 2 source code for the program.

INSTALLER
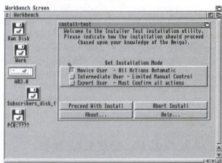
If you write your own software, Installer could make your life much easier when you try to work out how users should install the program.
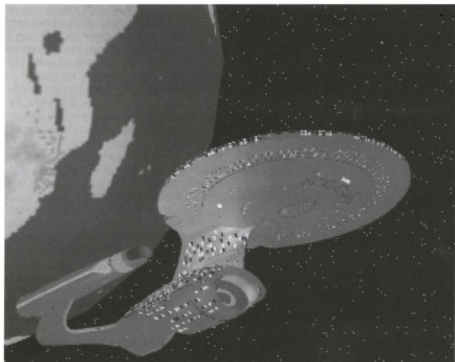
Let's get one thing clear: this software will not install your software for you. Installer was written by Commodore to make it easier for programmers to produce a simple and standard way of installing software. The programmer produces a script which tells the Installer program where to put the software, and allows the user to install it to any device, be it RAM disk, hard disk or networked disk.

The benefits of this should be obvious, because it means that all programs should have the same method of installing, making it easier for the many confused users out there.

Full instructions and examples of how to write your own installer scripts are included with the program, as well as a licence agreement which you should complete if you are planning to use Installer on any of your disks.

The licence agreement won't cost you anything, but you must send a copy of it to Commodore in America before distributing the main Installer program, even if it is PD. The programs and documentation are copyrighted by Commodore, so don't alter them. Check the licence agreement for full details.

OXFORD FONT

Save Little Solsbury Hill

Little Solsbury Hill near Bath is threatened by a bypass. It's a subject close to Richard Baguley's heart, who expresses himself in the Oxford font.

This elegant serif font is similar to Century, a font used by many newspapers for headlines. Amiga Format designer and our resident font expert Frank Bartucca says: "Oxford is a very versatile font, which is ideal for both body text and headlines. Whenever I see this font I am reminded of dreamy summer days punting on the Thames in Oxford."

Both Compugraphic and Postscript versions of the font are included on the disk, and the Compugraphic version can be installed on your Workbench as follows...

1 Decompress the font files from the subscribers disk by double clicking on the Font_Unpack icon. This will decompress the files to your RAM disk.

2 Run the Fountain (or Intellifont if you're using Workbench 3) program in your system directory.

3 Click on the gadget at the top right of the screen under Outline font source, and select RAM: from the list of volumes. Click on OK, and after a bit of disk activity the Oxford font will appear in the Source Typefaces list.

4 Click once on the font in this list and then on Install Marked Typeface. After a bit of whirring and a couple of disk swaps if you're booting from floppy, Oxford should appear on the list of installed typefaces on the right. Congratulations! You have just installed the font!

Reboot the machine, and any program which uses Compugraphic fonts (such as Deluxe Paint) should now be able to use the Oxford font. However, if you are running on Workbench 2, you may experience some problems in installing Compugraphic fonts. This is because there are some bugs in the AmigaDOS library which handles these fonts. Commodore have now supplied a fixed version of this library, and you can install this by typing the following line in the Shell:

```
COPY AMIGAFONTS2.0:LIBS/DISKFONT.LIBRARY
LIBS:
```

You should then insert the disks when you are prompted. This will copy the fixed version of the library to your Libs directory, and if you now reboot your Amiga you should be able to install Compugraphic fonts with no problems.

This is the original 24-bit image before being compressed to a JPEG using *FastJPEG* and put on this disk. Compare and contrast the quality of this original with the version on the Subscribers' Superdisk.

FASTJPEG

FastJPEG is a small, but very fast, viewer for graphics files which have been compressed using the JPEG (Joint Photographic Expertise Group) system, which squashes files down to a fraction of their previous size with only a slight loss of image quality. JPEGs are becoming increasingly popular, and many Bulletin Boards (including *Spong!*, the *Amiga Format* Bulletin Board) are now carrying large selections of images in this format.

There are two versions of the program included here for AGA and older machines. It can be run from either the CLI or from the Workbench. If you are running from the CLI, you should give the name of the file to be viewed after the command, and running it from the Workbench brings up a requester where you can pick the files you want to view.

Also included on this disk is a sample JPEG file for you to view, called Enterprise.JPEG. This is a ray-traced image (produced in *Imagine*) which took over 120K in it's original 24-bit IFF form.

After being compressed to a JPEG file by *Art Department Professional*, it takes just over 20K of space. Although this is a remarkable reduction, there is a price to pay, as you can see from the image when you view it. Compare it to the original image on this page and you will notice a loss of quality around the engines and the saucer section.
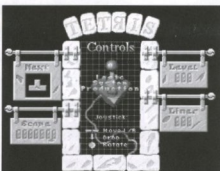
If you want to see what the various *Tetris Pro* types of blocks do, just watch the intro screen.

TETRIS PRO

One of the classic old favourites of the Amiga Public Domain games scene, *Tetris* is an addictive and frustrating little number which involves manoeuvring differently-shaped blocks into a pit to form solid vertical lines, which then self destruct.

There are any number of versions of similar *Tetris*-style programs doing the rounds on the PD circuit, including one in which you can play *Tetris* while copying disks, but this is one of the best clones I've seen.

Tetris Pro is controlled using a joystick. You rotate the blocks using the joystick and the fire button accelerates their fall. There are also several special pieces, including a dollar sign block which gives you extra points and a bomb which blows up all the neighbouring blocks. This can be extremely useful if you have a single block which is preventing you from finishing off a line.
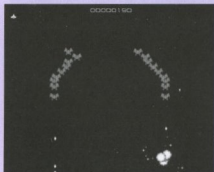
GALAGA DELUXE
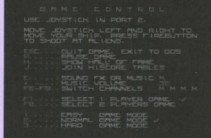
If you want to change any of the *Galaga Deluxe* playing options, such as easy, normal or hard mode, check this section on the intro screen.

Galaga Deluxe is a *Space Invaders* Clone, loosely based on a Vic-20 game, but don't hold that against it. The idea is very simple: you are a lone pilot in a never-ending battle against the alien hordes. You move along the bottom of the screen firing laser death bolts as you go, while the aliens hover above you, although some of them occasionally zoom down to get you.

Shoot all of the aliens and you move on to the next wave. Occasionally, an exploding alien will drop something, which (usually) aids you in your quest. These little bonuses from above include extra weapons, alien scopes (which bring the aliens on to your side) and

Another brave pilot pays the ultimate penalty in the endless war against the alien legions in *Galaga Deluxe*. War is hell...

can give you entry to the meteor storm, where you can get extra points by avoiding the meteors for as long as you can.

This game requires a joystick plugged in to port 2, and you are asked what sort of machine you have when you first start it up. For some reason, the graphics were being corrupted when I chose AGA mode on my A1200, but it works fine when you choose the ECS mode. These preferences are saved, so you won't need to set this every time. There's not really a lot more to say, except get them before they get you.
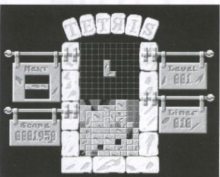
As you complete lines of blocks in *Tetris Pro*, they gradually reveal a picture in the background. I wonder if you can you see what it is yet?

If you have any suggestions, comments or if there are programs that you would like to see on the Subscribers' Superdisk, please write to:

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